

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Currently amended) A computerized method of automatically generating payment for electronic billing data for services rendered, comprising the steps of:
formatting billing data from a billing party for use by a host system, ~~[[a]]~~ the billing party and a billable party for automatically generating payment for services rendered;

automatically obtaining said formatted billing data in an invoice data file from said billing party, said billing data including an invoice that includes billing codes which identify the specific tasks undertaken by the billing party as a part of the services rendered;

automatically evaluating the invoice data file to determine whether the invoice data file type is valid;

automatically assigning a code to ~~each~~ the invoice data file and invoice within said file;

automatically evaluating the invoice data file and invoice to determine whether they contain essential billing data;

automatically evaluating ~~said invoices~~ the invoice to determine whether the invoice has been previously paid;

automatically comparing said billing data ~~in said invoice~~ with rule data defined by said billable party; said rule data containing billing codes; and

automatically authorizing generation of payment data if said billing data satisfies said comparison with said rule data.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said rule data are comparison statements stored in a rules database.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said payment data includes financial data for input to an accounting system of the billable party.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said payment data includes electronic funds transfer (EFT) data.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
automatically generating payment data for said authorized billing data; and
automatically providing said payment data to said billable party for
generating automatic payment to said billing party.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
generating a summary message specifying a billing data total amount to be
paid; and
automatically electronically notifying said billing party of said summary
message.
8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
automatically generating billing data analysis reports for review by said
billable party utilizing said billing data wherein said billing data includes billing
codes which identify the specific tasks undertaken by the billing party as a part of
the services rendered.
9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein said billing data analysis reports
are for review by said billing party.
10. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of providing
interactive computer screens so that said billable party supplies analysis data for
inclusion in billing data analysis reports.
11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10, wherein said analysis data
includes case budget data including total case time, case hours, case costs, hourly
rate, and case difficulty.
12. (Cancelled)
13. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of
automatically electronically notifying said billing party if said billing data does not
satisfy said comparison with said rule data.

14. (Currently amended) A computerized method for automatically processing [[an]] electronic ~~invoice~~ invoices generated by a billing party for a billable party utilizing rule data defined by said billable party and an invoice processing party, said method comprising the steps of:

electronically submitting [[an]] electronic ~~invoice~~ invoices to an invoice processing party for automatic evaluation in accord with rule data defined by a billable party and said invoice processing party, said rule data including billing codes which identify the specific tasks undertaken by the billing party as a part of the services rendered;

automatically assigning a code to each invoice;

automatically evaluating ~~the~~ each invoice to determine whether it contains essential billing data;

automatically evaluating said electronic invoices to determine whether the invoices have been previously paid;

automatically evaluating said electronic ~~invoice~~ invoices in accord with said rule data;

automatically electronically notifying said billing party of results of said evaluation;

automatically generating payment data for an electronic payment and designating said electronic ~~invoice~~ invoices as paid, if said electronic ~~invoice satisfies~~ invoices satisfy said evaluation; and

automatically generating invoice analysis reports for said billable party utilizing said paid electronic ~~invoice~~ invoices.

15. (Currently amended) A computerized system for automatically generating payment for electronic billing data, comprising:

means for formatting billing data from a billing ~~part~~ party for use by a host system, ~~[[a]]~~ the billing party and a billable party for automatically generating payment for services rendered;

means for automatically obtaining said formatted billing data in an invoice data file from said billing party for a billable party, said billing data including an invoice that includes billing codes which identify the specific tasks undertaken by the billing party as a part of the services rendered;

means for automatically evaluating the invoice data file to determine whether the invoice data file type is valid;

means for automatically assigning a code to ~~each~~ the invoice data file and invoice within said file;

means for automatically evaluating the invoice data file and invoice to determine whether they contain essential billing data;

means for automatically evaluating ~~said invoices~~ the invoice to determine whether the invoice has been previously paid;

means for automatically comparing said billing data with rule data defined by said billable party; and

means for automatically authorizing generation of payment data if said billing data satisfies said comparison with said rule data.

16. (Previously presented) A computer readable storage medium containing computer executable code for instructing a computer to operate as follows:

automatically obtaining billing data in an electronic format from a billing party for a billable party, said billing data including billing codes which identify the specific tasks undertaken by the billing party as a part of the services rendered;

automatically assigning a code to the billing data;

automatically evaluating the billing data to determine whether it contains data necessary for processing;

automatically evaluating said billing data to determine whether the billing party has been previously paid;

automatically comparing said billing data with rule data defined by said billable party; said rule data including billing codes which identify the specific tasks undertaken by the billing party as a part of the services rendered; and

automatically authorizing generation of payment data if said billing data satisfies said comparison with said rule data.

17. (Previously presented) The computer readable storage medium containing computer executable code for instructing a computer to operate of claim 16, further comprising automatically electronically notifying said billing party if said billing data does not satisfy said comparison with said rule data, said billing and rule data including qualitative data which identifies the specific tasks undertaken by the billing party.

18. (Cancelled)

19. (New) A computerized method for automatically processing billing data generated by a billing party for payment for services provided to a billable party, said method comprising the steps of:

automatically obtaining billing data in an electronic format from the billing party, said billing data including a listing of the specific tasks undertaken by the billing party as part of the services rendered to the billable party, wherein: the listing includes a plurality of single time billing entries each representing time spent by a billing party staff member in performing one of the specific tasks or a portion thereof; and the single time billing entries are identified by billing codes representing the specific tasks undertaken by the billing party as part of the services rendered;

automatically comparing said billing data with rule data defined by said billable party, wherein a portion of the rule data relates to assessing the single time billing entries for the specific tasks undertaken by the billing party as part of the services rendered to the billable party; and

automatically authorizing generation of payment data if said billing data satisfies said comparison with said rule data.

20. (New) The method of claim 19 wherein:

the rule data comprises a plurality of warning rules and a plurality of error rules;

the step of automatically comparing the billing data with the rule data comprises the sub-steps of, if the billing data fails to satisfy any of the error rules: ceasing further evaluation of the billing data; and automatically electronically notifying the billing party that the billing data failed to satisfy the error rules, without automatically authorizing generation of payment data; and

the step of automatically authorizing generation of payment data comprises the sub-steps of:

if the billing data satisfies all the warning rules and error rules, automatically authorizing generation of payment data according to the billing data; and

if the billing data satisfies all the error rules but not all the warning rules: automatically authorizing generation of payment data according to the billing data; and automatically electronically notifying the billing party that the billing data failed to satisfy the warning rules.